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FM AMEMBASSY KABUL

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 KABUL 5096

E.O. 11652: GDA

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, AF

SUBJ: SHAFIQ'S FIRST SIX MONTHS: ASSESSMENT

1. SUMMARY: ON BALANCE SHAFIQ GOVERNMENT'S FIRST SIX MONTHS
IMPRESSIVE FOR DYNAMISM (RARE FOR AFGHANISTAN), SOLID MOMENTUM
FOR CHANGE BUILT UP OVER PERIOD, AND NUMBER SIGNIFICANT
ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS. PROSPECTS
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FOR FUTURE MUCH LESS CLEAR, HOWEVER, AS (A) PRIMIN'S COMMIT-

MENT TO PROGRESS PER SE VERY SELECTIVE (DUE MIXTURE POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS AND PERSONAL PREFERENCES); (B) INCREASED EFFICIENCY AFGHAN BUREAUCRACY APPEARS TO BE WHETTING EXISTING APPETITE FOR INCREASED GOVERNMENT "CONTROL" (BOTH IN GENERAL SENSE OF RAW POWER AS WELL AS IN SPECIFIC CASES); AND (C) RGA APPEALS TO CONSERVATIVE, HYPER-NATIONALISTIC, MUSLIM ELEMENTS AS EFFORT BROADEN BASE OF SUPPORT RISK ENCOURAGING NASTIER WAVE OF XENOPHOBIA AND PROBABLY ENSURE INCREASED PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS. WITHIN AFGHAN CONTEXT SHAFIQ STILL APPEARS OVERALL BEST PRIMIN UNDER CONSTITUTION TO DATE, BOTH IN TERMS PROJECTED ABILITY STAY IN POWER AND PROVEN ABILITY RAISE RGA FROM TRADITIONAL LETHARGY. END SUMMARY.

2. MAIN THRUST SHAFIQ'S PROGRAMS DURING FIRST SIX MONTHS HAS BEEN IN ECONOMIC FIELD. THIS ALSO AREA WHERE GREATEST NUMBER FALSE STARTS OR DELAYS EVIDENT. MOST SPECTACULAR FALSE START WAS EFFORT TO INCORPORATE PLANNING AND BUDGETING FUNCTIONS WITHIN PRIME MINISTRY (KABUL 1098). HOWEVER, ON OTHER MATTERS RE ECONOMIC CENTRALIZATION SHAFIQ HAS MET WITH AT LEAST BUREAUCRATIC SUCCESS (E.G., FUNCTIONING THOUGH STILL FLEDGLING OMB OPERATION, IMPROVED CIVIL SERVICE DIVISION, A NEW OFFICE OF EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS (AS FOLLOW-UP TO OPERATION HELP), AND OTHER EXAMPLES INCREASED EFFICIENCY WITHIN PRIME MINISTRY). HUMAN SIDE EQUATION STILL UNBALANCED AS COUNTRY HAS USUAL LDC SHORTAGE SKILLED PERSONNEL. ON ECONOMY IN GENERAL, SHAFIQ HAS HIGHLY PRAGMATIC APPROACH. THUS, TO STATE ENTERPRISES OPERATING IN RED, HE HAS THREATENED CONVERT TO PRIVATE SECTOR (NO SUCH ACTION TO DATE, HOWEVER); DESPITE ADMITTED PROBLEMS OF VENALITY IN CIVIL SERVICE, SHAFIQ HAS THREATENED TO HIRE THOSE WHO PERFORM JOB WELL AND FIRE THOSE WHO DON'T, WHETHER THEY ARE VENAL OR NOT. TO DATE, THIS HAS REMAINED LARGELY A THREAT.

3. RE SPECIFIC GOALS OUTLINED EARLIER IN SHAFIQ'S POLICY STATEMENT (SEE KABUL 7289, DEC 13 1972,) FOLLOWING IS BRIEF CHECKLIST PROGRESS TO DATE:

(A) GENERAL ECONOMY: LONG-TERM GOALS INCREASING NATIONAL
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INCOME AND RAISING LIVING STANDARD OBVIOUSLY NOT YET ACHIEVED, ALTHOUGH RGA CLAIMS TO HAVE LAID BASIS FOR SAME BY IMPROVING STATISTICAL OPERATIONS, PLANNING FUNCTIONS AND EVALUATION PROCEDURES. SOME SUCH IMPROVEMENTS EVIDENT, ALTHOUGH WE BELIEVE POSITIVE RESULTS STILL FAR OFF.

(B) AGRICULTURE: THIS YEAR'S WHEAT HARVEST PROMISES TO BE GREATEST IN COUNTRY'S RECENT HISTORY, ALTHOUGH IT STILL

UNCLEAR HOW WELL RGA'S PERFORMANCE WILL MEET THIS NOVEL SITUATION. STRONG GOVERNMENT EFFORTS WILL BE NECESSARY TO HANDLE SURPLUS BOTH FOR STORAGE AND POSSIBLE EXPORT, PRICE SUPPORT AND ONGOING ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS WHO MIGHT CHOOSE CULTIVATE OTHER CROPS NEXT YEAR IN VIEW LOWER WHEAT PRICES NOW.

(C) INDUSTRY: MUCH ACTIVITY AND TALK IN INDUSTRIAL SECTOR HAVE AS YET PRODUCED FEW RESULTS. PRIVATE SECTOR BECOMING MORE CONCERNED AND UNEASY AS FIVE-YEAR TAX HAVEN UNDER INVESTMENT LAW RUNS OUT FOR INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS AND NEW TARIFF REVISIONS ESSENTIAL TO SURVIVAL MANY COMPANIES NOT YET PROMULGATED. LONG OVERDUE LAWS FOR MINING, PETROLEUM AND INVESTMENT IN GENERAL STILL BEING THRASHED OUT, THROUGH MUCH THOUGHTFUL AND HARD WORK BY OFFICIALS CONCERNED. LABOR LAW STILL UNDER APPARENTLY INTENSIVE STUDY PROBABLY DUE POLITICAL WORRIES OVER LEGALIZATION LABOR UNIONS (WHICH WOULD IF LAW PASSED BE FIRST NONGOVERNMENTAL ASSOCIATIONS TO BE LEGALIZED AND PROBABLY HAVE LEFTIST POLITICAL COLORATION). CABINET IN MID-JUNE DID SET MINIMUM WAGE (900 AFGHANIS PER MONTH) AND ESTABLISH RUDIMENTARY HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM -- ALTHOUGH BOTH LIKE DRAFT LAW AFFECT ONLY INDUSTRIAL WORKERS (WHICH RGA ESTIMATES APPROXIMATELY 46,000).

(D) FINANCE AND TRADE: NO SIGNIFICANT STRUCTURAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS OR MAJOR MEANS OF INCREASING DOMESTIC INCOME HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED. WHILE RGA WORKING ON IMPROVED TAX LAWS AND CUSTOMS COLLECTIONS HAVE IMPROVED DRAMATICALLY, GENERAL REVENUE COLLECTION STILL REMAINS A "SOME TIME THING." MODERN BANKING RULES CITED BY SHAFIQ IN DECEMBER STILL FARAWAY BUT IMF, IBRD AND AID FIRST PHASE EXPERTS HAVE BEGUN WORK ON DESIGN OF BANKING SYSTEM REFORMS AND LAWS WITH FULL SUPPORT OF MINFIN. IMPLEMENTATION OF U.S. FERTILIZER AND SIMILAR

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PROJECTS MAY ALSO PROVIDE BOTH SUCCESSFUL PRECEDENT AND IMPETUS ENCOURAGE SMALL LOAN CONCEPT IN COUNTRY. RGA ONLY BEGINNING FLEX SOME MUSCLE ON IMPORT CONTROL AND EXPORT ENCOURAGEMENT, BUT IT DOUBTFUL REALLY EFFECTIVE

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CONTROLS CAN BE IMPLEMENTED GIVEN CONTINUING VOROUS NATURE
AFGHAN BORDERS.

(C) NARCOTICS: PUBLIC COMMITMENT TO JOIN INTERNATIONAL
WAR ON OPIUM TRAFFICKING WILL LEAD IN LATE JULY TO UN
CONFERENCE IN GENEVA TO COORDINATE SIZEABLE FOREIGN BILATERAL AND
MULTILATERAL HELP FOR AFGHAN EFFORT. RGA HAS THUS FAR
LAUNCHED, UNDER US PRODDING, A FEW LIMITED ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS,
BUT SEEMS TO BE WAITING FOR CLEARER PICTURE OF DIMENSIONS OF
ASSISTANCE BEFORE DECIDING WHETHER TO TACKLE INCREJIBLY
DIFFICULT ENFORCEMENT PROBLEM IN SERIOUS WAY.
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4. USAID OFFICIALS DEALING WITH ECONOMIC BUREAUCRACY ON
DAILY BASIS HAVE NOTICED SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS IN ATTITUDE
AND PERFORMANCE BY AFGHAN OFFICIALS. CONSENSUS IS THAT A
NEW ASSERTIVENESS IS EVIDENT, STEMMING FROM BOTH EXISTING

BASE TECHNICAL COMPETENCE AND MORE SELF CONFIDENCE ON POLICY SIDE. LATTER MANIFESTATION CLEARLY STEMS FROM WHATEVER ENERGY SHAFIQ HAS INJECTED INTO SYSTEM. RGA BUREAUCRAFTS NOW TEND QUESTION FOREIGN TECHNICIANS ON MANY IMPORTANT ASPECTS NEW AND ONGOING PROGRAMS, AND INTEREST SEEMS TO STEM FROM GENUINE PROFESSIONAL CONCERNS RATHER THAN NITPICKING. PERMEATING BUREAUCRACY, HOWEVER, IS GREATLY INCREASED CONCERN FOR CORRECT PROTOCOL IN DEALING WITH FOREIGN OFFICIALS, PLUS MORE SENSITIVITY TO POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF ECONOMIC PROGRAMS (E.G., MINES AND INDUSTRIES MINISTER AZIZI'S RECENT CONCERN OVER ISSUE OF PROPOSED FOREIGN MANAGEMENT OF CONCRETE POLE PLANT, AND GOVERNOR REZA'S STATEMENT THAT FUTURE HELMAND VALLEY EFFORTS SHOULD MATCH RGA PLANS TO SETTLE MORE PUSHTUNS IN AREA). RGA DEFINITELY GROWING MORE INSISTENT THAT ALL AID PROJECTS HAVE GREATER AFGHAN "CHARACTER" IF NOT ACTUAL INPUT.

5. "RULE OF LAW" THEME STILL PRESENTED BY SHAFIQ AND RGA AS WATCHWORD OF NEW REGIME. ALTHOUGH SHAFIQ HAS YET TO PRODUCE MOST OF NEW LAWS NEEDED, CONSIDERABLE EFFORT HAS BEEN EXPENDED ON ATTEMPTED ENFORCEMENT EXISTING LAWS AND TRYING TO REDUCE TRADITIONAL VENALITY CIVIL SERVICE AND POLICE. LOCAL PRESS INCREASINGLY REPORTS ARRESTS AND TRIALS OFFICIALS OF ALL LEVELS CAUGHT TAKING BRIBES AS WELL AS JUSTICE METED OUT TO OTHER LAW BREAKERS. SHAFIQ'S WORDS TO CONTRARY, IMPARTIAL ENFORCEMENT ANY LAW IN AFGHANISTAN STILL VERY MUCH CONSTRAINED BY POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS (PERSONALITIES INVOLVED, FAMILY CONNECTIONS, RELATIVE AUTONOMY TRIBAL AREAS) AND HEAVY WEIGHT OF TRADITIONS WHICH ASSUME QUASI-LEGALITY IN EYES MOST AFGHANS. TASKS IN THIS FIELD REMAIN HERCULEAN, AND COMPLICATED BY CULTURAL PATTERNS WHICH PROMPTED PRIMIN'S QUIP TO AMBASSADOR NEUMANN THAT SHAFIQ HAD IMPRESSION THERE WERE ONLY 25 HONEST MEN IN WHOLE COUNTRY (KABUL 1098).

6. ACTIVITY FOREIGN POLICY CLEARLY REFLECTS ENERGY ALREADY EVIDENT WHEN SHAFIQ FOREIGN MINISTER (PORTFOLIO WHICH HE STILL CONFIDENTIAL

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RETAINS). ALTHOUGH NO REAL DEPARTURES FROM TRADITIONAL AFGHAN FOREIGN POLICY HAVE BEEN TAKEN, RGA WORKING HARD TO IMPROVE CREDENTIALS AS ACTIVE LEADER OF "NON-ALIGNED" GROUP AS WELL AS TO EASE REGIONAL FRICTIONS WITHOUT SACRIFICING ESSENTIALS OF AFGHAN POLICIES. MOST DRAMATIC STEP TO DATE IS CLEARLY THE CONCLUSION AND RATIFICATION OF AFGHAN-IRANIAN TREATY ON HELMAN WATERS, WHICH SOLVES 100-YEAR OLD DISPUTE AND OPENS POSSIBILITIES INCREASED COOPERATION WITH IRAN. TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS ASIDE, TREATY PROVIDES BASIS REORIENTATION OF SOME AFGHAN ATTENTION TO WESTERN NEIGHBOR IN BOTH ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SPHERES WHICH HERETOFORE IMPEDED BY WATERS PROBLEM, TRADITIONAL AFGHAN MISTRUST OF IRANIAN CRAFTINESS,

AND AFGHANREOCCUPATION WITH PUSHTUNISTAN PROBLEMS. PUSH-TUNISTAN STILL LIVE ISSUE, HOWEVER, AND RGA APPEARS ONCE AGAIN GETTING UNFORTUNATELY CLOSE TO LINE WHICH SEPARATES EXPRESSIONS OF DEEP CONCERN FROM ACTION IN SUPPORT OF PUSHTUNS WITHIN PAKISTAN. CONTINUING CRISES OVER COMPETITION BETWEEN ISLAMABAD AND DISCONTED TRIBAL LEADERS IN NWFP AND BALUCHINTAN "FORCING" TO USE RGA TERMINOLOGY) AFGHANISTAN TO ADOPT HARDER LINE. PAK-AFGHAN RELATION CONSEQUENTLY REMAIN FRAUGHT WITH COMPLEXES ON BOTH SIDES OF BORDER. MEANWHILE SHAFIQ HAS APPARENTLY FENDED OFF SOVIET PRESSURE FOR CLOSER AFGHAN INVOLVEMENT WITH THEIR PROPOSED ASIAN SECURITY SCHEME, HAS CONSCIENTIOUSLY COURTED ARABS, AND IN GENERAL HAS PERFORMED AGILE JUGGLER'S ACT WITH VARIOUS OTHER FOREIGN POWERS REPRESENTED ON KABUL SCENE, INCLUDING US. NO MAJOR BALLS HAVE YET BEEN DROPPED.

7. MOST INTERESTING DEVELOPMENTS DURING PERIOD HAVE BEEN ON DOMESTIC POLITICAL FRONT WHERE SHAFIQ ATTEMPTING TO BUILD BROAD BASE OF POWER. AMONG ACTIONS RELATED TO THIS GOAL MOST OBVIOUS HAS BEEN APPEAL TO CONSERVATIVE RELITIOUS ELEMENTS IN COUNTRY (KABUL A-39, JUNE 5). SOME ELEMENTS THIS APPEAL HAVE ANTI-FOREIGN TONE (E.G., DEMOLITION KABUL COMMUNITY CHRISTIAN CHURCH, THREATENED EXPULSION NOOR EYE CLINIC PERSONNAL AND LIKELY SIMILAR ACTION AGAINST MEDICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, COMPLAINTS AGAINST UNDUE FOREIGN INFLUENCE IN AFGHAN AFFAIRS, WHILE OTHERS APPEAR CALCULATED TO CATER TO AFGHAN NATIONALIST SENTIMENTS (NEW STRESS ON AFGHAN CULTURAL TRADITIONS, RECENT CABINET DECISION TO BUILD AFGHAN CULTURAL CENTER). QUESTION CONFIDENTIAL

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YET TO BE ANSWERED IS WHETHER SHAFIQ CLEVER AND POWERFUL ENOUGH TO KEEP LID ON XENOPHOBIA WHICH ALWAYS SIMMERS BELOW SURFACE IN AFGHANISTAN.

8. IN TERMS OF AMASSING RAW POLITICAL POWER, SHAFIQ HAS ALREADY FAR
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AFGHAN PRESS LAW) AND PROVIDES INCREASINGLY STRINGENT GUIDANCE TO GOVERNMENT PAPERS IN WHAT AMOUNTS TO FULL-BLOWN PR CAMPAIGN. IN ADDITION, SEVERAL CRITICAL WEEKLY NEWSPAPERS HAVE BEEN CLOSED OR NEUTRALIZED, EITHER BY STRATAGEM OF APPOINTING PUBLISHER TO GOVERNMENT POST (KUSHKAKI, CARAVAN; FARAND, ROZGAR) OR BY VOLUNTARY OR ENFORCED SUSPENSION OF SEVERAL OTHERS. BOTH GOVERNMENT AND INDEPENDENT JOURNALISTS IN RECENT WEEKS HAVE PRIVATELY EXPRESSED DEEP CONCERN FOR LONG-RUN IMPLICATIONS THESE MOVES WHICH THEY FEEL WILL DEPRIVE GOVERNMENT OF CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM. FINALLY, SHAFIQ GOVERNMENT ALSO APPEARS TO BE LAYING GROUNDWORK FOR BETTER POLITICAL
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TUTELAGE OF MASSES. IN ADDITION TO ABOVE-MENTIONED PLANS FOR CULTURAL CENTER, GOVERNMENT HAS RECENTLY DECIDED TO BUILD TELEVISION STATION IN KABUL AND TO ESTABLISH MOBILE AUDIO-VISUAL TEAMS UNDER MININFO AND CULTURE AS MEANS OF EXPANDING GOVERNMENT INFORMATION AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN PROVINCES.

9. IN CONCLUSION, RGA UNDER SHAFIQ IS BECOMING OUTWARDLY MORE SELF-ASSERTIVE AND NATIONALISTIC AND INWARDLY MORE CENTRALIZED AND COHESIVE. PROSPECTS FOR CONTINUED REFORM INITIATIVES BY GOVERNMENT WILL DEPEND HEAVILY ON ABILITY OF SHAFIQ TO MAINTAIN FREEDOM OF ACTION WITHIN POWER STRUCTURE AT TOP AND TO INCREASE GOVERNMENTAL DIRECTION OF MOST ASPECTS OF LIFE IN COUNTRY. SHAFIQ APPEARS TO BE CUT FROM IDEAL MOLD

FOR AFGHAN PRIMIN. HIS DOMESTIC CREDENTIALS ARE GOOD (SHINWARI PUSHTUN, INITIALLY RELIGIOUS EDUCATION, FATHER A WELL-KNOWN RELIGIOUS LEADER, WELL IN TOUCH WITH INTERESTED GROUPS ON ANY GIVEN ISSUE, AND HE IS WELL-VERSED ON FOREIGN INSTITUTIONS, TECHNOLOGY, ECONOMICS, POLITICAL INTERESTS AND POTENTIALS FOR GIVING AID. HIS GENUINE COMMITMENTS, QUESTIONS OF MUSLIM ORTHODOXY NOTWITHSTANDING, ARE PROBABLY ONLY TWO: STAY IN POWER AND EFFECT WHATEVER REFORMS IN AFGHAN NATIONAL LIFE HE BELIEVES BOTH DESIRABLE AND POSSIBLE. TO ACHIEVE REFORM GOALS HE MUST PRACTICE DELICATE BALANCING ACT WHICH INVOLVES SUCH DISPARATE ELEMENTS AS SOVIET SENSIBILITIES, PRESSURES FROM FANATIC YET INFLUENTIAL RELIGIOUS LEADERS, ASPIRATIONS OF PASHTUN TRIBAL LEADERS AND UNCERTAIN NATIONAL ECONOMIC FUTURE. PREDECESSOR GOVERNMENTS SINCE 1964 CONSTITUTION HAVE ALWAYS BEEN SEVERELY HAMPERED BY LACK OF POWER; AND SHAFIQ IS FIRST COMMONER PRIMIN TO HAVE ADDRESSED THIS PROBLEM, SO FAR SUCCESSFULLY, THOUGH NOT YET DEFINITELY. AS SHAFIQ CONTINUES TO CONSOLIDATE POWER (IN ATMOSPHERE OF WHAT SOME TERM "CREEPING DAUDISM"), MISSION WILL BE LOOKING FOR MANIFESTATIONS OF PHILOSOPHY HE EXPRESSED TO AMBASSADOR IN EARLY SPRING: STRUGGLE FOR REFORMS OFTEN REQUIRES POLITICAL MEASURES WHICH MAY NOT BE NICE (KABUL 3780). OUR RESERVATIONS INCLUDE: (1) SHAFIQ GOVERNMENT HAS YET TO TRANSLATE MUCH OF RHETORICAL COMMITMENT TO REFORM INTO IRREVERSIBLE ACTION; (2) A NEW AND STILL FORMLESS SHAFIQ-ENGENDERED ATMOSPHERE OF COOLNESS TO CERTAIN ASPECTS FOREIGN PRESENCE IN AFGHANISTAN HAS YET TO
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BE DEFINED OR TO RUN ITS COURSE; AND (3) SHAFIQ'S EFFORTS TO CENTRALIZE POLITICAL POWER IN HIS OWN OFFICE AND PERSON MAY YET RUN AFOUL OF COUNTRY'S TRADITIONAL FRAGMENTED POLITICAL STRUCTURE.
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